



Butterfly Project-Helping Incarcerated Women Have Access to the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program

Public Health Problem

In Alabama, 49,419 women between the ages of 40 and 64 were eligible to participate in the Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program (ABCCEDP) in 2003. Typically, only 25 percent of those eligible women participated in the program. Reaching women in rural areas and recruiting eligible women who have never heard of the program can be difficult. In response to such low participation, a health educator with the HIV/AIDS Division asked ABCCEDP to conduct a health promotion class at both of the women's state prisons. After the success with the state prisons, the program was expanded to county facilities. This experience revealed that the majority of incarcerated women had never heard about the screening program, and thus had not participated.

Taking Action

In January 2004, a partnership was formed among ABCCEDP, the AVON Foundation Breast Care Fund, and the Alabama Sheriffs' Association. The partnership, known as The Butterfly Project, educates women about the importance of early detection of breast and cervical cancers. Working with the county sheriffs' departments and state correctional facilities, the project staff transport incarcerated women for breast and cervical cancer screenings at their county health departments. As a result, more than 700 women have been educated and screened. One incarcerated woman shared her appreciation with the program after she found a mass and was later diagnosed with breast cancer. She is currently in treatment and is extremely grateful that the program motivated her to take care of herself.

Implications and Impact

The Butterfly Project has received national attention in its first year through the American Jail Association's magazine *American Jails*. ABCCEDP was invited to share details of The Butterfly Project at the association's annual conference and has subsequently received telephone calls from other states interested in developing similar programs. In addition to providing breast and cervical cancer information for female inmates, health educators are developing a videotape to teach women how to perform a breast self-exam and to increase cervical cancer awareness. The video will be broadcast nationally through the American Jail Association's satellite teaching network. Participating correctional facilities can use the educational message to teach incarcerated women the importance of early detection. The message also gives these women a sense of self-worth and empowerment as they learn steps to take care of themselves.

Contact Information

Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program
 P.O. Box 303017, Montgomery, AL 36130-3017
 Phone: (334) 206-5547 or (800) 252-1818 www.adph.org
<http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/exemplary>